A

SERMON

Preached at the Second

GENERAL MEETING

OF THE

GENTLEMEN, and others in

and near *LONDON*,

Who were Born within the

COUNTY of YORK,

In the Church of St. *Mary-le-Bow*,

February 17. $16\frac{72}{73}$.

By *JOHN SHARPE*, D. D. Rector of St. *Giles* in the Fields, and Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Lord High Chancellour of *England*.

LONDON,

Printed for *Walter Kettilby* at the *Bishop's-Head*, in St. *Paul's* Church-Yard. 1680.

A

SERMON

Preached at the Second

GENERAL MEETING

OF THE

GENTLEMEN, and others in

and near LONDON.

Who were Born within the

COUNTY of YORK.

In the Church of St. Mary-le-Bow,

February 17. 16[illegible].

By JOHN SHARPE, D. D. Rector of St. Giles in the Fields, and Chaplain to the Right Honourable the Lord High Chancellour of England.

LONDON.

Printed for Walter Kettilby at the Bishop's Head, in St. Paul's Church Yard. 1680.

A-18pam
S531SCB

To my Honoured

FRIENDS and COUNTRY-MEN,

Mr. { *William Petyt*, *Richard Graham*, *John Cooke*, *Mich. Wrightſon*, *Tob. Humphrys*, *Anth. Lawſon* } Mr. { *John Short*, *Francis Boynton*, *Peter Short*, *Gab. Wettenhall*, *Arthur Sedgwick*, *Thomas Watſon* }

Stewards of the laſt *York-ſhire* Feaſt.

GENTLEMEN,

I Now at length Preſent you with that Sermon which at your deſire I Preached at the Second Anniverſary Meeting of our Countrey-men, and which you were pleaſed ſo far to Approve as to Requeſt the Publication of it. That I have not performed your Requeſt ſo ſoon as might be expected, I hope you will pardon me, ſince I had not till this time a convenient leiſure to Tranſcribe

my Papers for the Press. If this plain Discourse, now that it is publick, do any way conduce to promote Doing Good *which is the Argument of it, I shall thank God for the Success, and You for putting me upon the Attempt.*

Gentlemen, I am

Your Affectionate Countrey-man,

Friend and Servant,

JOHN SHARPE.

A

SERMON

PREACHED

At the Second general Meeting of the Gentlemen and others in and near *London*, who were Born within the County of *York*.

ECCLES. iii. 10.

I know that there is no good in them, but for a man to rejoyce and to do good in his life.

THis Book of *Eccleſiaſtes* gives us an account of the ſeveral Experiments that *Solomon* had made in order to the finding out wherein the Happineſs of Man in this World doth conſiſt; and theſe Words are one of the concluſions he drew from thoſe Experiments.

No man had ever greater Opportunities of Trying all the ways wherein men generally ſeek for Con-

Contentment than he had; and no man did ever more induſtriouſly apply himſelf to, or took a greater liberty in enjoying thoſe good things that are commonly moſt admired than he did: And yet after all his Labor and all his Enjoyments he found nothing but Emptineſs and Diſſatisfaction.

He thought to become Happy by Philoſophy, *Eccleſ.* 1. 13. *giving his heart*, as he tells us, *to ſeek and ſearch out all the things that come to paſs under the Sun*: Yet upon Tryal, he found all this to be *Vanity and vexation of Spirit*.

He applyed his mind to Political Wiſdom and other ſorts of Knowledge, and his Attainments in that kind were greater than of any that were *ver.* 18. before him; yet he experienced at laſt that *in Wiſdom was much grief, and he that increaſeth Knowledge increaſeth Sorrow.*

Cap. 2. *ver.* 1, 3. He *proved his heart* (as he tells us) *with Mirth and Wine* and all ſorts of Senſual Pleaſures to find if theſe were good for the Sons of men: and yet ſo far was he from his deſired ſatisfaction in theſe things, that he was forced to *ſay of Laughter that it* *ver.* 2. *was mad, and of Mirth what good doth it.*

He turned himſelf to works of Pomp and Magnificence, he built him ſtately *Houſes*, and made *ver* 4. him *Gardens*, and *Vineyards*, and *Orchards*, and *Fountains*. He increaſed his Poſſeſſions, and *gather-*

ed

ed Silver and Gold and the precious Treaſures of Kings and of the Provinces. He got him a vaſt Retinue, and kept the moſt ſplendid Court that ever any Prince of that Countrey did: yet (as he tells us) when he came to *look upon all the works that his hands had wrought, and on the labour that he had laboured to do, behold all was vanity and vexation of Spirit, and there was no profit under the Sun.* ver. 8. ver. 11.

But wherein then is there any Profit if not in theſe things? What is that good that the ſons of men are to apply themſelves to in order to their living as comfortably as the ſtate of things here will allow? This queſtion (after an intimation of the uncertainty and perplexedneſs of all humane events, but withal of the exactneſs of the Providence of God *who hath made every thing beautiful in its ſeaſon,* He thus reſolves in the words of the Text, *I know* (ſaith he) *that there is no good in them but for a man to rejoyce and do good in his life*, that is to ſay,

I have found by long experience that all the Happineſs that is to be had in the good things of this life doth ariſe from theſe two things, *Rejoycing* in the enjoyment of them, and *doing Good* to others with them while we live. Take away theſe two Uſes and there is no good in them.

Or if you pleaſe we may Interpret the firſt part of his Propoſition not of *things* but of *men* thus: I *I know there is no good in them, i. e.* I am convinced that

there is nothing so good for the sons of men; or, nothing that more contributes to their happiness in this world, than that every *man should rejoyce and do good in his life.* And to this purpose the words are rendred by several Interpreters, but it is no matter which of the sences we pitch upon, since in effect they come both to one thing.

Two things then, *Solomon* here recommends to every one that would live comfortably in this world, *Rejoycing* and *doing Good*: and I do not know what can be more proper and seasonable to be recommended and insisted on to you at this time and on this occasion, than these two things; for the putting *them* in practice makes up the whole design of this Meeting.

We are here so many Brethren met together to *Rejoyce* and to *do Good*. To *Rejoyce* together in the sense and acknowledgment of Gods mercies and Blessings to us, and in the enjoyment of Society one with another: And to *do Good* not only by encreasing our Friendship and Mutual Correspondence, but by joyning together in a chearful Contribution to those our Country-men that need our Charity. To entertain you therefore upon these Two Points seems to be my Proper Business.

But in treating of them I shall make bold to invert the order in which they are put in the Text, and shall first speak of *doing Good* though it be last named,

named, and ſhall afterwards treat of *Rejoycing*. The truth is, *doing good* in the order of nature goes before *Rejoycing*, for it is the Foundation of it. There can be no true joy in the Poſſeſſion or uſe of any worldly bleſſings, unleſs we can ſatisfie our ſelves we have done ſome *good* with them. It is the *doing good* that ſanctifies our other enjoyments and makes them matter of Rejoycing.

Now in treating of this Argument I ſhall briefly endeavour theſe Three things.

Firſt, I ſhall earneſtly recommend to you the Practice of *doing good* upon ſeveral Conſiderations.

Secondly, I ſhall repreſent the Practicableneſs of it, by ſhewing the ſeveral ways which every perſon (though in the meaneſt Circumſtances) is capable of doing good.

Thirdly, I ſhall make two or three Inferences by way of Application.

I begin with the Firſt thing, ſeriouſly to recommend the practice of *doing good*.

But where ſhall I begin to ſpeak, either of the Obligations that lye upon us, or of the Benefits and Advantages that do accrue to us by *doing good in our lives*? or having begun, where ſhall I make an end? the ſubject is ſo copious that the ſtudy of a whole life cannot exhauſt it. The more we conſider it, ſtill the more and the weightier Arguments will

preſent themſelves to us to ingage us in the practice of it: and the more we practiſe it, ſtill the more ſhall we *deſire* ſo to do, and the more happy and Bleſſed ſhall we find our ſelves to be.

For, to *do good* is nothing elſe but to act according to the frame and make of our Beings. It is to gratifie thoſe Inclinations and Appetites that are moſt ſtrongly rooted in our Natures; ſuch as Love and Natural Affection, Pity and Compaſſion, a Deſire of Friends and a Propenſity to knot our ſelves into Companies and Societies: what are all theſe but ſo many *ſtimuli*, ſo many powerful incitements of nature to put us upon doing good offices one to another?

To *do good* is the end of all thoſe Acquiſitions, of all thoſe Talents, of all thoſe Favours and Advantages that God has bleſt us with, it is the proper uſe we are to put them to. If we do not employ them this way, we are ſo far from being *better* for them that we are much *worſe*. What will ſignifie our Wit and good Humour, our Strength of Reaſon and Memory, our Wiſdom and Knowledge, our Skill in Arts, and Dexterity in managing Buſineſs, our Wealth and Greatneſs, our Reputation and Intereſt in the world, I ſay what will all theſe ſignifie if they do not render us more Uſeful and Beneficial to others? That which ſets the price and value upon every worldly bleſſing, is the Opportunity it affords us of *doing good*.

To

To *do good* ſeems to be the foundation of all the Laws of Nature, the ſupreme Univerſal Law; it is that by which the World is ſupported, and take that away, all would preſently fall into confuſion, And perhaps if it were particularly examin'd, it would be found that all the other Natural Laws may be reduced to this and are ultimately to be reſolv'd into it. It is a queſtion whether there be any natural Standard whereby we can meaſure the Virtue or the Viciouſneſs of any Action, but the Influence that it hath to promote or hinder the *doing of good*. This is that that ſeems to ſtamp Virtue and Vice.

To *do good* is the great Work for the ſake of which we were ſent into the world, and no man lives farther to any purpoſe than as he is an Inſtrument of doing good. Be our lives otherwiſe never ſo buſie and full of action, yet if others receive no benefit by them, we cannot give our ſelves any tolerable account of our time, we have in effect liv'd idly and done nothing.

To *do good* is that which of all other ſervices is moſt acceptable to God, it is that which he hath laid the greateſt ſtreſs upon in the Scripture, it is that which he hath with the moſt earneſt and affectionate perſwaſives, with the ſtrongeſt Arguments, with the greateſt promiſes and with the moſt dreadful threatnings enforc'd upon us. It is that

that which he hath choſen before all Sacrifices and all Religious worſhip ſtrictly ſo called to be ſerv'd with. It is that which he hath appointed for the great Expreſſion both of our Thankfulneſs for his Benefits, and of our Love and Devotion to him. Laſtly it that which *Moſes* and the Prophets make the Sum of the Old Law, and Chriſt and his Apoſtles the Sum of the New.

And very great Reaſon there is for it; for to *do good* is to become moſt like to God. It is that which of all other Qualities gives us the greateſt reſemblance of his Nature and Perfections, for perfect Love and Goodneſs is the very Nature of God, and the Root of all his other Attributes; and there was never any Action done, any work wrought by him throughout the vaſt Tracts of infinite ſpace, from the Beginning of time to this Moment, but was an Expreſſion of his Love, and an inſtance of *doing good*, (nay I doubt not to ſay, the moſt ſevere acts of his Juſtice and Vengeance have all been ſuch) And therefore with great reaſon hath our bleſſed Lord told us, that the way to become the Children of our Heavenly Father is to do good to all, with the ſame Freedom and Unreſervedneſs that God makes his Sun to ſhine upon the World.

1 *Joh.* 4. 8.

Mat. 5. 44, 45.

And of this our Bleſſed Saviour himſelf was the moſt illuſtrious Example that ever appeared in the world, ſo that to *do good* is that which doth moſt

moſt truly and perfectly render us the Diſciples and Followers of Jeſus, makes us really be what we pretend we are. His whole life (as the Goſpel tells us) was but a continual going about doing good. The great Deſign of his Coming from Heaven, and of all that he ſpoke, and of all that he did, and of all that he ſuffer'd upon Earth, was the benefiting of others. And he hath left it as the great diſtinguiſhing Badge and Character, whereby his Diſciples ſhould be known from other men, that they ſhould *love one another even as he had lov'd them*, that is (as his Apoſtle expounds him) they ſhould love and do good to that degree as *to lay down their lives for the brethren.*

Joh. 13. 34, 35. 1 *Joh.* 3. 16.

But to *do good* is not only our greateſt Duty but our greateſt Intereſt and Advantage, which is that that *Solomon* chiefly refers to in the Text. It is certain that no man can take a more Effectual way to render his Being in the world Happy and Comfortable to him (according to the ordinary courſe and event of things) in what Condition or Circumſtances ſoever he is placed, than to do all the good he can in his life; ſo that though a man that lays out himſelf in this way, ſeems only to reſpect the good of other people, yet in true reckoning he moſt conſults his own profit.

For to *do good* in the natural way to raiſe us friends, who ſhall be oblig'd to contribute their

En-

Endeavours to the furthering our honeſt deſigns; to the upholding and ſecuring us in our Proſperity, and to the ſuccouring and relieving us when we are in any evil Circumſtances, ſuch is the Contrivance and the Conſtitution of this World, that no man can ſubſiſt of himſelf, but ſtands in continual need of others both for their comfortable Society and their neceſſary Aſſiſtance in his Affairs. Now of all men living the Good man who maketh it his Buſineſs to oblige all about him, is moſt likely to be the beſt befriended.

To *do good* is the trueſt way to procure to a mans ſelf a Good name and Reputation in the World, which as it is a thing deſirable upon many accounts, ſo it is a ſingular Advantage to a man for the carrying on his ſecular deſigns. Nay to *do good* is to Embalm a mans name and to tranſmit it with a grateful Odour to poſterity. *The memory of a good man ſhall be bleſſed.* And the ſence of mankind has always been, that too much honour could not be given to the name of thoſe that have done good in their generation.

Prov. 10.7

But which is a great deal more than all this, to *do good* is the moſt certain effectual means to procure the bleſſing of God upon our endeavours, and to entitle our ſelves to his more eſpecial care and providence and Protection: So that let what will come; in all circumſtances and conditions the

the good man has the greatest assurance that all things shall at least be tolerably well with him, and that he shall never be miserable. *Trust in the Lord* (saith *David*) *and be doing good, so shalt thou dwell in the Land, and verily thou shalt be fed.* *Psal.* 37. *ver.* 3.

Nay further, to *do good* is to entail a blessing upon our Children after us. *I have been young and now am old* (saith the same Psalmist) *yet saw I never the Righteous* (that is the merciful and good man, for that is the Notion of the word in that place and in most others) such an one saw I never *forsaken nor his seed begging their bread.* *Ibid. v.* 25.

Lastly to conclude this point, To *do good* (besides all these advantages that attend it) is most to consult our own peace, and to make the best provision possible for our pleasure and delight. Charity (as Dr. *Hammond* used to say) is really a piece of Sensuality. And *Epicurus* himself the great Master of Voluptuousness would confess that it was not only more Brave but more Pleasant to do kindnesses than to receive them. And certainly every good man will find it so, for as the exercise of Charity and Beneficence is as truly a gratification of our Natural Inclinations and Appetites as any other action or thing that causeth pleasure to us: So is it also a gratification of those Appetites which are the highest and the noblest

we have. Now by how much the appetite that is gratifi'd is more noble and divine; by ſo much muſt the delight that ariſeth from that gratification be more exquiſite. So that it was no very great Hyperbole of our Divine Poet when he ſaid that

——————— All joys go leſs
Than that one joy of doing kindneſſes.

And which is further to be conſidered, it is not with this pleaſure as it is with moſt others that vaniſh with the enjoyment, nay often leave bitterneſs and melancholy upon the mind after they are gone off. For to *do good* is a permanent pleaſure, a pleaſure that will laſt as long as our lives. The memory of our good actions will always be accompanied with Delight and Satisfaction; when all our other paſs'd Enjoyments prove matters of anguiſh and torment to us upon our reflections on them, theſe will be a refreſhment; and the nearer we approach to death, ſtill the more comfort we ſhall find in them. Would we therefore treaſure up to our ſelves a ſtock of laſting peace and joy to ſupport us in all conditions of our life and ſo make our paſſage eaſie at our death, let us do all the good we can.

I:

I think I have said enough to convince any one of the truth of *Solomons* Proposition that *there is nothing better for a man,* nothing that more concerns him either in point of duty or happiness *than to do good in his life.* Much more might be said, and what hath been said might have been said with more advantage, and greater evidence if it had been fit to insist upon every particular: but I will pursue this argument no further, but proceed to the second general point I propos'd, which is to set before you the practicableness of this great duty, by shewing the several wayes which every person though in the meanest Circumstances is capable of doing good.

A great many there are that are as strongly convinced as may be that 'tis both their Interest and duty to be doing good in their lives, but they complain that it is not in their power, they have not any Means or Opportunities for it, and they bemoan themselves sadly upon this account, as thinking their lives useless because they have not those visible Capacities of being serviceable to the world that others have.

To such as these let me say this in the general: There is no condition in the world so mean and despicable, but yields us Opportunities of doing good. There is neither Old nor Young, Man nor

Woman, Rich nor Poor, High nor Low, Learned nor Unlearned, but in their Sphere, by a good husbandry of those Talents that God has intrusted to their care and management they may be very useful to others, and prove instruments of much good to their generations.

This truth St. *Paul* most elegantly sets forth in 1 *Cor.* 12. where he compares the Society of Christians to a Natural body. There he shews that as in the Natural body there are many members, and all those members have not the same dignity and honour, nor the same use or office: and yet every member (even the meanest) hath its particular use by which it doth real service to the body; nay so useful it is that the body cannot be without it; so it is with the Church of Christ and with every body politick. There is a necessity both in the Church and in the State, that there should be variety of functions and callings, and degrees, and conditions. There must be some to govern and some to be governed; there must be some more conspicuous, some more obscure; some whose gifts and endowments lay this way, and some whose Talents lay in another way; and yet there is not one of these but in his degree and station, either is or may be as useful as any that belong to the Society. *So that the eye cannot say to the hand* (as our Apostle there expresseth it) *I have no need*

need of thee. Nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you, nay more, *those members of the body* (as he continues) *that seem to be most feeble are yet very necessary.*

To reduce the Apostles notion to its particulars, or to shew in how many respects every individual person that is a Member of a Society is necessary to the publick, and either doth or may serve the Weal of it, and so do good in his life, is a task too great for me to undertake at this time, let it suffice at the present to propose to you these general heads.

First of all none can want opportunities of doing good that is in a capacity of performing any acts of mercy or charity strictly so called whether that charity be shew'd to the bodies or souls of men. Now the instances and expressions of this way of doing good are infinite, as infinite as are the wants and necessities of mankind.

To the bodies of men we do good when ever we contribute to the relieving and easing them of the outward pressures and wants, and necessities they lie under: Such as Sickness, Pain, Poverty, Hunger, Nakedness, Debts, Imprisonment, or any other outward affliction that falls upon them; whether that ease and relief be effected by our purse, or by our counsel and advice, or by our labour and pains.

And

And ſure ſome one of theſe three things there is none ſo mean or inconſiderable in the world, but it is in his power to beneſit his poor Neighbour with.

To the Souls of men we do good, whenever by our diſcourſes or other endeavours we make men better or wiſer; when we inſtruct the ignorant, when we ſatisfie the doubtful, when we reduce thoſe that are miſled by error, when we eſtabliſh the weak, when we reprove thoſe that do amiſs, in a word, all our attempts and endeavours in what way ſoever to reclaim men from vice, and to bring them to wiſdom and ſobriety is a Charity to their Souls; and whether our deſigns ſucceed or not we ſhall be rewarded as thoſe that have done good in the world.

Secondly, All the acts of Beneficence and kindneſs, nay even of Civility and good Nature, are to be accounted among the inſtances of doing good. A man doth good not only by acts of Charity properly ſo called, but by every courteſie that he doth to another; He doth good by ſhewing his reſpect and good will to all about him, by reconciling differences among neighbours, and promoting peace, friendſhip and ſociety as much as he can; by being Generous and Liberal and Hoſpitable according to his ability; by forgiving injuries, and if it be poſſible making friends of thoſe that did them; by being

being eaſie of acceſs, and ſweet and obliging in his carriage; by complying with the infirmities of thoſe he converſeth with, and in a word, by contributing any way to make the lives of others more eaſie and comfortable to them.

Thirdly, A man alſo doth good when he makes uſe of that acquaintance or friendſhip or intereſt, that he hath with others to ſtir them up to the doing of that good which he by reaſon of the narrowneſs of his condition, or for want of Opportunity cannot do himſelf. This is a very conſiderable inſtance of doing good how ſlight ſoever it may ſeem; the man that exerciſes himſelf this way is doubly a benefactor; for he is not only an inſtrument of good to the perſon or perſons for whom he beg'd the kindneſs or the charity; but he does alſo a real kindneſs to the man himſelf whom he puts upon the benefaction, for God will not leſs reward his good will for being excited by another.

Fourthly, Another way to do good is to be careful and diligent, and conſcientious in the diſcharge of all thoſe Publick Offices which we are call'd upon to execute in the place where we live. How burthenſome ſoever theſe be, and how much ſoever of our time they rob us of, yet God by calling us to them, hath put a *prize into our hands*, (as the Wiſe man ſpeaks) to do much good *if we have hearts to make uſe thereof*.

Fifthly,

Fifthly, We do good when being in a private Capacity we ſo carry our ſelves in all the Relations in which we ſtand as the nature of the Relation requireth. As for inſtance, when being Subjects we conſcientiouſly obey the Laws of the Kingdom and ſubmit to our Governours, and promote what we can the publick Peace both of Church and State. When being Maſters of Families we take care of thoſe under our Charge, making ſufficient proviſion both for their Souls and bodies: When being Huſbands or Wives we diſcharge faithfully all the Conjugal duties: When being Parents we love our children, and *bring them up in the fear and nurture of the Lord*. When being children *we obey our Parents in all things*. When being ſervants *we do our work in ſingleneſs of heart, not as men-pleaſers but as thoſe that account they have a Maſter in Heaven*. When having contracted friendſhips we are ſecret and faithful, and prudent in the maintaining and preſerving of them; and ſo proportionably in all the other relations that we ſtand in. All theſe things though they appear little, yet are they in their degree a real good and benefit to mankind, and ſo neceſſary that there is no living tolerably without them.

Sixthly, We alſo do good by an honeſt and a diligent purſuit of our calling and employment. There is no Art or Trade that we are bred to, but if it be a lawful one, it may be of great uſe to the pub-

publick, and by well minding it, and fairly manageing it we may render our selves very profitable members of the Common-wealth.

Seventhly and Lastly, We may do a great deal of good by our good Examples, by being to others Patterns of Piety and Prudence, of Diligence and Industry, of Peaceableness and Loyalty, of Humility and Meekness and Temperance. In a word, every man that will make himself Eminent in any Virtue will be a Light to the world, his life will be a constant Sermon, and he will often prove as effectual a Benefactor to those about him by his example as others are by their Counsels and Exhortations.

And now all these things considered, who is there among us in such deplorable Circumstances that he can reasonably pretend to want ability or opportunity to *do good in his life?* Sure I am he must live in a desart, and have no Communication with mankind that cannot some or other of these ways be useful and beneficial to them. And thus much of our Second Head of Discourse.

I now come in the Third and last place to make some Application of what hath been spoken.

And First, Since every man is so highly concern'd as we have seen, to do good in his life, let us all be perswaded seriously and heartily to apply our minds hereunto. Let us look upon it, not as a by-

work, a thing to be done now and then as there is occasion after our own turns are served: But let us lay out our selves upon it, let us propose it to our selves as the great Business of our lives. Let us take all opportunities for it, let us contrive and manage all our affairs so that they may some way or other be subservient to the carrying on this great work.

Let this be the end of our gathering riches, and the measure of our expending them. To heap up riches that we may be rich, or to throw them away upon our lusts are both equally intolerable, it is the doing good with them that sanctifies both the getting and the spending them.

Let this be the compass to steer and direct us in our pursuit after knowledge, in our learning Arts and Sciences, in the managery of our Trades and employments; in a word, in the choice and in the prosecution of every design that is proposed to us. In all these things, the great enquiry is to be, what good will they tend to? How shall we be rendred more useful to the world, if our designs and endeavours as to these matters do take effect?

Let this be the great rule by which we proceed in the Education of our Children and Relations, and the provisions we make for them in the world. Let it be our first care to possess them with a deep sense of the duty they owe to the Publick, and to furnish them with such qualities as will render them profitable members of it, and to put them into such profes-

sions

ons and employments as may afford them fair scope for the exercise of those qualities. If we thus provide for them, though we otherwise leave them never so small an Estate, yet with the Blessing of God they have a good Portion.

Lastly, let this design of doing good influence our very Offices of Religion. When we make our applications to the Throne of Grace, let us be sure to have the Publick always in mind; and even when we pray for our selves let it be with this design and resolution, that as God in mercy bestows upon us the Blessings and the Grace we pray for, we will employ them for the good of others.

O that we would thus seriously concern our selves in doing good! O that we would once lay aside all our little selfish designs, and that narrowness and penuriousness of Spirit with which most of us are bound up; and with ardent Love and Charity set our selves *not to seek his own but every man another's good*, as the Apostle exhorteth. 1 Cor. 10. 24.

Secondly, if the doing good be so necessary a duty as hath been represented, what must we say of those men that frame to themselves Models of Christianity without putting this duty into its notion? There is a sort of Christianity which hath obtained in the world, that is made up of Faith and knowledge of the Gospel Mysteries, without any respect to Charity and good works. Nay have we not heard of a sort of Christianity, the very perfection of which

seems to consist in the disparaging this duty of doing good as much as is possible; crying it down as a heathen virtue, a poor blind piece of Morality, a thing that will no way further our salvation; nay, so far from that, that it often proves a hindrance to it, by taking us off from that full relyance and recumbency that we ought to have on the Righteousness of Jesus Christ only, in order to our Salvation.

But O how contrary are these Doctrines to the Doctrine of Christ and his Apostles! How widely different a thing do they make Christianity to be from what it will appear if we take our notions of it from their Sermons and Practices! Is it possible that he that went about doing good himself; made it his meat and drink, the business and employment of his life, should set so light by it in us that are his followers?

Is it possible that they that so often call upon us
1 Tim. 6. 18. *to do good, to be rich in good works, above all things to have*
1 Pet. 4. 8. *fervent charity among our selves*, telling us that all *faith is*
1 Cor. 13. 2. 13. *nothing, all knowledge of Mysteries* is nothing, all gifts of *Prophecy* and *Miracles* are nothing, but that *Charity* is all in all, I say is it possible that they should think doing good so insignificant, so unprofitable, nay so dangerous a thing as these I spoke of do represent it?

But I need not further reprove these Opinions because I hope they find but few Patrons; but this seriously ought to be reproved among us, viz. that we do not generally lay that stress upon this duty we are speaking of that we ought to do. Many

Many are ready enough to acknowledge their Obligations to do good, and count it a very commendable thing, and a work that God will bless them the better for, yet they are loth to make it an essential ingredient of their Religion, they think they may be Religious and serve God without it. If they be but sober in their lives, and just in their dealings and come to Church at the usual times, they have Religion enough to carry them to Heaven, though in the mean time they continue covetous and hard and uncharitable, without bowels of pity and compassion, and make no use of their wealth, or their power and interest, or their Parts and industry, or their other Talents committed to them, for the doing good in the world.

Far be it from any man to pretend to determine what vertues or degrees of them are precisely necessary to Salvation, and what Vertues or degrees of them a man may safely be without: But this is certain, that charity and doing good are none of those that can be spared. The Scripture hath every where declared these qualities to be as necessary in order to our Salvation as any condition of the Gospel. Nay if we will consult St. *Matth.* 25. where the Process of the General Judgment is described, we shall find these to be the great points that at the last day men shall be examined upon, and upon which the whole case of their eternal state will turn. So that if we take the Scripture for our Guide, these men at last

will

will be found to be much mistaken, and to have made a very false judgment both of Religion and of their own condition.

Thirdly, From what hath been said about doing good, we may gather wherein that Perfection of Christianity which we are to aspire after, doth consist. It has been much disputed which is the most Perfect life, to live in the world as other men do, and to serve God in following our employments, and taking care of our families, and doing good offices to our neighbors, and discharging all other duties that our relation to the publick requires of us; or to retire from the world, and to quit all our secular concernments, and wholly to give up our selves to Prayer and Meditation, and those other exercises of Religion properly so called.

This latter kind of life is so magnified by the *Romanists*, in comparison of the other, that it hath engrossed to it self the name of Religious. None among them are thought worthy to be styled Religious persons, but those that Cloyster up themselves in a Monastery. But whatever excellence may be pretended in this course of life, it certainly falls much short of that which is led in a publick way. He serves God best that is most serviceable to his Generation. And no Prayers or Fasts or Mortifications are near so acceptable a Sacrifice to our Heavenly Father as to *do good in our lives*.

It is true, to keep within doors and to attend our devo-

devotions (though those that are in appearance most abstracted from the world, are not always the most devout persons) I say this kind of life is the most easie and the safer. A man is not then exposed so much to temptations; he may with less difficulty preserve his innocence; but where is the praise of such a vertue? Vertue is then most glorious and shall be most rewarded, when it meets with most tryals and oppositions.

And as for the bravery of contemning the world and all the Pomps of it, which they so magnifie in this kind of life, alas it is rather an effect of pusillanimity and love of our ease, and a desire to be free from cares and burdens, than of any true noblenes of mind. If we would live to excellent purpose indeed; if we would shew true bravery of spirit and true piety towards God, let us live as our blessed Lord and his Apostles did. Let us not fly Temptations but overcome them; let us not sit at home amusing our selves with our pleasing contemplations, when we may be useful and beneficial abroad. Let us so order our devotions towards God, that they may be a means of promoting our worldly business and affairs, and doing good among men. Let us take our fit times of retirement and abstraction, that we may the more freely converse with God and pour out our souls before him; but let this be only to the end that we may appear abroad again more brisk and lively in vanquishing the Temptations that come in our

way.

way, and more prompt and readily disposed to every good work. This is to imitate our Lord Jesus, to walk as we have him for an example. This is a life most suitable to the contrivance and the genius of his Religion, which is more accommodated to Cities and publick Societies, than to Cloysters and Deserts. And lastly this is to walk in a conformity to his command who hath bid us *make our light so to shine before men that they may see our good works and glorifie our Father which is in Heaven.* Mat. 5. 16.

But Fourthly and lastly, If it be a thing so necessary that every man should do good in his life as hath been represented, then how much to be Reproved are they that do no good till their death! That live scrapingly and uncharitably and uselesly to the world all their lives long, and then when they come to dye, think to Atone for their sins and neglects of this kind, by shewing some extraordinary Bounty to the poor, or devoting some part of their estates to publick or pious uses.

I must confess this kind of proceeding doth to me seem just like the business of putting off a mans repentance to his death-bed. It is absolutely necessary that a man should repent though it be never so late; and so it is that he should do good: if he have done little good in his life, he is bound as he loves his soul to shew some extraordinary uncommon instances of Charity and a Publick spirit, when he comes to die. But then it is here as it is with the long

delay-

delaying of Repentance, the deferring it so long has robbed the man of the greatest part of the praise and the comfort he might have expected from it. His Rewards in heaven will be much less though his good deeds should be accepted, but he is infinitely uncertain whether they will or no. It must be a very great act of Generosity and Charity that can obtain a pardon for a whole life of uncharitableness.

Let us all therefore labour and study *to do good in our lives*, let us be daily giving evidences to the world of our kind and charitable disposition, and let not that be the first which is discovered in our last Will and testament. If God hath blessed us with worldly goods, let us distribute them as we see occasion in our life time, when every one may see we do it voluntarily; and not stay till we must be forced to part with them whether we will or no, for that will blast the credit of our good deeds both with God and man.

I have said enough concerning the first point recommended in the Text, *viz. doing Good*. I now come briefly to Treat of the other, that is, *Rejoycing*, which is equally a part of the business of this day.

There is no good (saith *Solomon*) *in any earthly thing*; or *there is nothing better for any man than to rejoyce and to do good.*

The *Rejoycing* here recommended, is capable of two senses, the first more general and more concerning us as Christians, the other more particular and which more immediately concerns us as we are here met upon this occasion.

In the first place by *Rejoycing* we may take to be meant, a constant habit of joy and chearfulness, so that we are always contented and well pleased, always free from those anxieties and disquiets and uncomfortable reflections that make the lives of mankind miserable. This now is the Perfection of *Rejoycing* and it is the utmost degree of Happiness that we are here capable of. It must be granted indeed that not many do arrive to this state, but yet I doubt not but that it is a state that may be attained at least in a great measure in this world. Otherwise the Holy men in Scripture, and particularly the Apostles of our Lord would never have recommended it to us so often as they have done. *Rejoyce evermore*, saith S. *Paul* to the *Thessalonians*, and to the *Philippians*, *Rejoyce in the Lord always, and again I say rejoyce.*

1 *Thess.* 5. 16.
Phil. 4. 4.

The way to attain to this happy condition doth consist chiefly in these three things: First a great innocence and virtue, a behaving our selves so in the world that our Consciences shall not reproach us. This St. *Paul* lays as the Foundation of *Rejoycing*, *This* (saith he) *is our rejoycing, the Testimony of our Conscience that in simplicity and godly sincerity I have had my conversation in this world.* It is in vain to think of any true solid Joy or Peace or Contentment without a hearty practice of all the duties of our Religion, so that we can satisfie our selves of our own sincerity before God.

2 *Cor.* 1. 12.

And then secondly to make us capable of this constant Rejoycing besides the innocence of our lives there must go a firm and hearty perswasion of Gods parti-

particular Providence; a belief that he not only dispenseth all events that come to pass in the world, even the most inconsiderable; but that the measure of the Dispensations of his Providence is infinite Wisdom and Goodness and nothing else: so that nothing doth or ever can happen to us in particular, or to the world in general but what is for the best. Now when we firmly believe this and frequently attend to it, how can we be either solicitous for the future or discontented at the present events of things, let them fall out never so cross to our desires and expectations? This is the best Antidote in the world (and an effectual one it is) against all trouble and vexation and uneasiness that can happen to us upon any occasion whatsoever, to wit, the consideration that all things are managed by an infinitely Wise and good God, and will at last prove for the best, how unaccountable soever they appear to us at present. And this is that which the wise man insinuates in the verse before the Text when he saith that *God hath made every thing beautiful in his season.*

Thirdly, Another requisite both for the procuring and preserving this continual chearfulness and rejoycing, is a frequent and fixed attention to the great rewards of the other world, which God hath promised to all that truly love him and endeavour to please him. This consideration will extreamly add to our comfort and contribute to our Rejoycing under all the miseries and afflictions that we can possibly fall into, namely, that whatsoever condition we are in here

we ſhall certainly in a little time be in a moſt happy and glorious one, and the worſe our circumſtances are in this life, the greater (if we be good) ſhall be our happineſs in the next, for *theſe light afflictions* (as S. *Paul* tells us) *which indure but for a moment, do work for us a far more exceeding weight of glory.*

2 Cor. 4. 17.

This then is the joy that we are to endeavour after in the firſt place, to be conſtantly well pleas'd and contented with our preſent condition, whatever it be, and theſe are the ways to attain to it.

But ſecondly, there is another more particular Notion of *Rejoycing*, and which I conceive *Solomon* doth chiefly intend in the words of the Text, and that is the free and comfortable enjoyment of the good things of this life that God hath bleſſed us with, in oppoſition to a pinching and penurious way of living. This I ſay ſeems to be the notion of *Rejoycing* that the Text ſpeaks of, as appears by the following verſe. *Solomon* having told us in the text, that there is nothing better for a man than to *rejoyce* and *do good*, he adds by way of explication of what he meant by *rejoycing*, theſe words, *that every man ſhould eat and drink and enjoy the good of all his labours, for it is the gift of God.* And frequently in this Book of *Eccleſiaſtes* doth he perſwade to this kind of rejoycing. Thus in *Chap.* 2. *ver.* 24. *there is nothing better for a man, than that he ſhould eat and drink, and that he ſhould make his ſoul enjoy good in his labour, this alſo I ſaw it was from the hand of God.* And in *Chap.* 5. *v.* 18. *Behold that which I have ſeen, it is good and comely for one to eat and drink,*

drink, and to enjoy the good of all his labours that he taketh under the ſun all the days of his life which God giveth him, for it is his portion. And in *Chap. 6. v.* 1, 2. he repreſents it as a *great evil that he hath ſeen under the ſun, and yet ſuch an evil as is common among men, that a man to whom God hath given riches, and wealth, and honour, ſo that he wanteth nothing for his ſoul of all that he deſireth, yet God giveth him not power to eat thereof, but a ſtranger eateth it, this* (ſaith he) *is vanity and an evil diſeaſe.*

And there is certainly great reaſon in what he ſaith. For to have a plentiful portion of the good things of this life, and not to have the heart to make uſe of them for the enjoyment of our ſelves and friends; for the refreſhing us under the toyl that this life doth expoſe us to; for the promoting Acquaintance and Society, and the rendering our condition as eaſie as may be, is as unaccountable a folly as we can be guilty of, and makes us really as poor and neceſſitous as thoſe that want bread, but only not ſo pitiable.

Taking now this to be the ſence of *rejoycing* in the Text, (as I believe it is) we have from hence a good warrant for this days Meeting, for we come together to *rejoyce* in *Solomons* ſence, that is, *to eat and drink and to enjoy the good of our labours*, it being *the gift of God* ſo to do.

And this practice of ours is not only reaſonable in it ſelf, but is commended to us by the example of Gods people both under the Law and the Goſpel. The *Jews* by the appointment of God himſelf were to meet every year three times at *Jeruſalem*, the Capital City

See *Deut.* 16. City of the Nation *to feast and to rejoyce before the Lord*, as we have it in the expreſs words of *Moſes*. And the Chriſtians for near two hundred years after our Saviour had their *Agapæ*, their Feaſts of charity wherein they met together both poor and rich to enjoy and make merry one with another. It is true theſe Feaſts were at length left off by common conſent, becauſe there grew abuſes in them; they became occaſions of Luxury and exceſs, and ſo matters of ſcandal to our Religion. But this was not an ill reflection upon the thing it ſelf, which was innocent and commendable, but upon the *abuſe* of the thing. A good and laudable inſtitution was perverted to evil purpoſes. However this very conſideration ought to make us very careful of our carriage and behaviour in theſe our Meetings, leſt we fall under the ſame inconveniencies, which that we may prevent, Two things are eſpecially needful to be taken care of by us.

Firſt, That we do not exceed the bounds of *rejoycing* preſcribed to Chriſtians, that is, that we avoid all exceſs, and uſe the Creatures of God, ſoberly and temperately, ſo as to give offence to none, nor to *make proviſion for the fleſh to fulfil the luſts thereof.*

And ſecondly, That we take care to perform and make good the ends and deſigns of theſe *Feaſts* of *rejoycing*; which ends, if we will take our meaſures from thoſe Laws that God gave to his own People in the Old Teſtament, and which the modern *Jews* themſelves in their Commentaries take notice of; and which are

ſo

ſo reaſonable in themſelves that without any Authority they do recommend themſelves to us, are theſe four following.

Firſt, That we Rejoyce before the Lord, that is, that we make our humble acknowledgments and return our due praiſes and thanks to him for all the good things he hath bleſſed us with in our lives, confeſſing that all we have is from his free bounty and goodneſs, and that our Meeting together is to praiſe his name upon that account. And this was the thing that was meant by thoſe ſolemn Sacrifices that the *Jews* were bound to offer at *Jeruſalem* at their Annual Feaſts.

The ſecond end of theſe Feaſts is to take occaſion from hence to learn our duty, to be inſtructed in all the branches of that obedience we owe unto God. For as *Maimonides* obſerves, that was one of the principal reaſons of Gods calling together all the people of the *Jews* to appear at the Feaſt of Tabernacles, to wit, that they might hear the Law read unto them; and this deſign is I ſuppoſe purſued by us in our chuſing this Place to Aſſemble in.

A third end of theſe Feaſts (as the ſame *Maimonides* tells us) & is manifeſt from Scripture is to promote acquaintance & Friendſhip, and brotherly love one with another. And this is a very noble end, and ſerves many excellent purpoſes, and nothing can be beyond it except

The fourth and laſt end of theſe Meetings, which is to *do good*; to exerciſe our Charity towards our poor indigent Brethren. No man at the Solemn Feaſts of the

Jews,

Exod. 23. 15. *Jews, was to appear before the Lord empty.* He was to bring his offering not only to God by way of recognition and acknowledgment to him: but for the poor also that they might rejoyce as well as he. This is well observed by *Maimonides* from *Deut.* 16. 14. where it is thus said, *Thou shalt rejoyce in thy feast, thou and thy son, and thy daughter, thy man-servant and thy maid-servant, the Levite and the stranger, the fatherless and the widow that are within thy gates.*

This then is the great end of our Assembly, that not only we, but the Fatherless and the widow; all of our Countrey, that need our Charity, may *rejoyce* with us and for us. And this is that which *Solomon* joyns with *rejoycing* in the Text, *There is no good in them but for a man to rejoyce and do good*: and what that man who by the sentence of God was declared the wisest of all men hath thus joyned together, let none of us presume to put asunder. These are the Rules, and these are the ends that we are to observe in this our Feast; and let us all for the Honour of Christs Religion, and for the credit of our particular Countrey, charge the observation of them upon our selves: which if we can all resolve to do, I can safely apply to every one of you, that saying of *Solomon* in the 9*th* Chapter of this book of *Ecclesiastes*, and the 7*th* verse, with which I shall conclude: *Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart, for God now accepteth thy work.*

ERRATA.

PAge 8. l. 6. *it that*, r. *it is that.* p. 9 l penult. for *in* r. *is.* p. 13. l. 10. r. *propoſed.* p. 14. l. 23, 24. for *lay*, r. *ly.*

FINIS.